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The Gallup Survey: Fiction Sales Up in the U.S.

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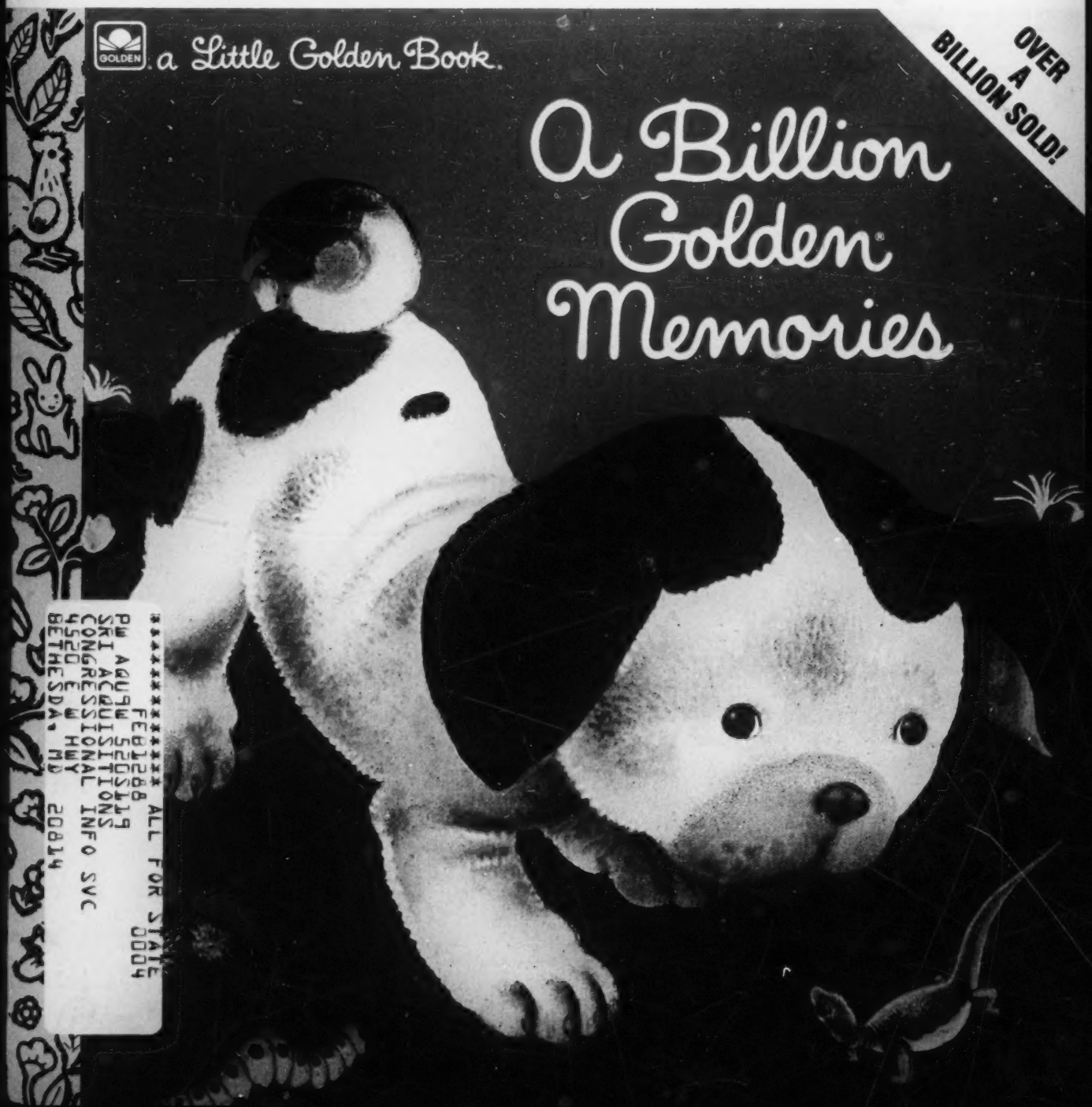

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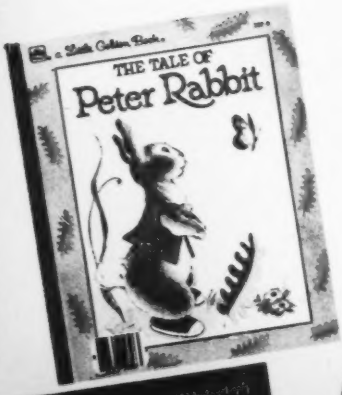

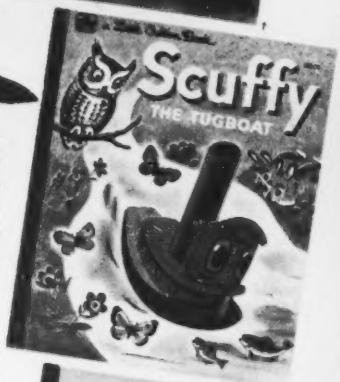

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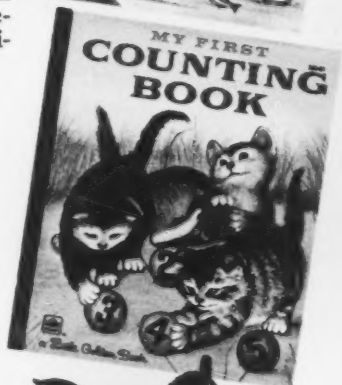

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FEATURES

BOLOGNA '87
Gearing Up for Bologna 19
by Herbert R. Lottman

Americans at the Fair 20

The Changing Foreign Rights Market 28
by Leslie E. Owen

A New Era in Canadian Children's Books 36
Children's publishing north of the border has taken some giant steps forward *by Frieda Wishinsky*

U.K. Drive Will Push Children's Books 38
by Jennifer Taylor

DEPARTMENTS

NEWS OF THE WEEK 10

Harper & Row Offered $190 Million from Private Investor

Talk with Theodore Cross, Suitor for Harper & Row

Bantam Marketing People Move to Dell

Authors Guild Reorganizes

Sterling Lord and Literistic Agencies Merge

Cross Currents

First Small Press Expo

The 'Brittle Books' Problem

'N.Y. Review of Books' Buys 25% of 'Granta'

Igor Kropotkin Dies

BOOKSELLING & MERCHANDISING 44

Waldenbooks Promotes Plans to Capture New Markets

AUDIO/VIDEO PLUS .. 49

Caedmon Put on the Market

ABA Preview: No Video Ghetto in D.C.

TRADE NEWS 53

Writers at Work: A Talk with Armistead Maupin

Hardcover Books: Bantam Expands Cookbook Program

PW INTERVIEWS 56

Caitlin Thomas

FORECASTS 58

Nonfiction 58

How-To Books 62

Fiction 67

Paperbacks 71

Children's Books 76

COLUMNS

Highlights 7

Letters 8

Calendar 8

People 14

The Gallup Survey 16

Southern Spotlight 40

Rights 42

Talk of the Trade 48

My Say: Richard Curtis ... 52

Weekly Exchange 82

Paperback Bestsellers 88

Hardcover Bestsellers 90

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Fiction Titles Are Gaining

Gallup surveys during 1986 revealed that the overall incidence of book-buying among Americans has remained steady at 20%. However, fiction books have expanded their share of total books bought, from 39% in 1984 to 44% in 1986. In contrast, nonfiction books comprised a smaller proportion of purchases in 1986 (40%) than in 1985 (44%) or 1984 (42%).

In terms of subject matter, there have been decreases since 1984 in the proportions of action/adventure/war and historical fiction purchased. History was a smaller proportion of the nonfiction market in 1986 than in 1984, but there was growth in the autobiography/biography and the home & garden/how-to markets. (Table 1).

As has been true since 1984, a majority of 1986 books were purchased in a bookstore (53%). But the proportion of books bought in a department or discount store increased to 11%.

The average price paid for a paperback book in 1986 was $5.36, a 5% increase over the 1985 average of $5.12. About two-thirds (63%) of hardcovers cost over $10, and the average price rose only 1% from the 1985 level of $15.18 to $15.38. (Table 2).

Overall, there have been few changes in the proportion of books purchased at a discount. Hardbacks remain more likely than paperbacks to be bargain purchases. More than one-third (37%) of hardback books were bought at a reduced price from 1984 to 1986. There has been a slight increase in the porportion of discounted paperbacks since 1984, so that in 1986 one in four paperbacks was purchased at a discount. Among books purchased in a bookstore, there has been a gradual growth since 1984 in the proportion sold at less than jacket price; in 1986 about one-fourth (24%) of books bought in a bookstore were discounted.

TABLE 1

TYPES OF FICTION/NONFICTION BOOKS PURCHASED IN 1986

Type of Fiction Book Purchased	TOTAL FICTION BOOKS 1984 %	1985 %	1986 %	Chg.% Pts. 1984–1986
Mystery/Spy/Suspense	18	16	17	-1
Romance	16	16	16	0
Popular Fiction	10	10	10	0
Action/Adventure/War	13	13	10	-3
Science Fiction	10	10	10	0
Children's	na	na	10	—
Historical	12	15	8	-4
Western	4	3	5	+1
Humor	3	4	5	+2
Occult/Supernatural	4	2	3	-1
Other	7	8	2	-5
Don't Know	3	3	4	+1
Total	100	100	100	

Type of Nonfiction Book Purchased	TOTAL NONFICTION BOOKS 1984 %	1985 %	1986 %	Chg.% Pts. 1984–1986
Reference/Instruction/ Computer	16	19	18	+2
Autobiography/Biography	14	14	17	+3
Historical	14	13	10	-4
Religious	9	11	10	+1
Home & Garden/How-To	5	8	9	+4
Leisure	8	6	9	+1
Health/Diet/Exercise	7	7	6	-1
Cookbook	5	5	5	0
Children's	na	na	3	—
Investment/Economics/ Income Tax	4	4	3	-1
Other	13	10	6	-7
Don't know	5	3	4	-1
Total	100	100	100	

NOTE: Results are based on 12,241 telephone interviews conducted among a nationally representative sample of adults, age 18 and older, from January–December 1986.

TABLE 2

PRICE PAID ON ALL BOOKS PURCHASED

Price Paid	HARDBACK 1984 %	1985 %	1986 %	Chg.% Pts. 1984–1986	PAPERBACK 1984 %	1985 %	1986 %	Chg.% Pts. 1984–1986
$2.50 or less	6	5	6	0	23	20	19	–4
$2.51–$3.95	4	3	4	0	36	31	29	–7
$3.96–$6.00	8	8	9	+1	21	26	29	+8
$6.01–$10.00	21	18	16	–5	11	13	13	+2
$10.01–$15.00	26	28	26	0	5	5	5	0
More than $15.00	32	37	37	+5	2	3	3	+1
Don't remember	3	1	2	–1	2	2	2	0
Total	100	100	100		100	100	100	
Mean Average	$14.62	$15.18	$15.38		$4.76	$5.12	$5.36	